ON LSA/LSO RELATIONS

Resolution presented by the Political Committee for the 1966 Convention.

1. In the course of its world development, capitalism has known two principal historic tendencies in the national question. The first is characterised by the awakening of national consciousness and national movements, the struggle against national oppression and the creation of national states. The second is the development and intensification of all kinds of intercourse between nations; the breakdown of national barriers, the creation of the international unity of capital, of economic life in general, of politics, science, and culture.

"Both tendencies," as Lenin remarked, "are a universal law of capitalism." The first is more typical of the earlier stages of capitalist development; the second of the epoch of imperialism and socialist revolutions. But the first tendency has reappeared in new forms during our own period — the epoch of imperialism— particularly since the Second Imperialist War, as a result of the failure to this point of the established working class parties in the developed capitalist-imperialist countries to carry through a socialist revolution which would liberate the colonial areas. In the colonial and neo-colonial world, the national struggle still retains a progressive content, as an integral part of the anti-imperialist struggle.

The national question arises in our own day as the expression of the incomplete character of the bourgeois revolution in the oppressed nation, and at the seme time, the rotten-ripeness of developed capitalism in the oppressor nation. Of these features, clearly the latter is the dominant one. The possibility no longer exists anywhere of a strictly bourgeois national revolution: either the national revolution grows over into a socialist revolution and the expropriation of the national bourgeoisie as well as imperialist holdings, or it must degenerate into some form of neo-colonialism. Imperialism excludes the possibility of a capitalist solution to the national question.

Capitalism has become an "international" system only at the cost of profoundly aggravating the national question, through the exploitation of entire nations by imperialism. Thus in the imperialist epoch of capitalist development the national struggle cannot be separated from the anti-capitalist struggle. The solution of this national question is ultimately bound up with the victory of socialism on a world scale.

2. In Canada, the province of Quebec, which is the political "patrie" of the French-Canadian nation, bears many of the features of the classical colonial or neo-colonial pattern. The French-Canadian capitalist class has never developed as a "normal" national bourgeoisie. Its **political** subordination to the English-Canadian bourgeoisie and the latter's American and British allied capitalist interests, was assured by 1837 and Confederation in 1867, which ended all possibility of a distinctly French-Canadian bourgeois revolution through constitutionally legalizing the commercial and industrial hegemony of the English-Canadian capitalist class supported by British imperialism. Deprived of its own control over tariff policies, money and banking, and the other accutrements of the normal "national" state, the small French-Canadian bourgeoisie was faced for all time with the objective necessity to cooperate with, and the difficulty of competing against, the English-Canadian bourgeoisie.

3. As a result, Quebec passed through its industrial revolution, not as a "national" economy, but as a function of North American and Canadian capitalist development as a whole. This is clearly demonstrated in contemporary Quebec's economic structures: on the one hand, a compartment of large-scale high productivity, relatively recent enterprises and industries, largely dominated by extraction (raw materials) and primary products industries, and producing primarily for the export market; on the other hand, a parallel but scarcely related strata of small-scale low productivity older enterprises devoted to secondary manufactur(ing), and producing mainly for the domestic (provincial) market. It is within this latter marginized sector of the Quebec economy that the feeble French-Canadian bourgeoisie is almost entirely

confined. This is the source of its **economic** weakness as a class.

4. This basic pattern of capitalist development in Quebec has had important repercussions for the French-Canadian proletariat. Average personal income in Quebec is 32 per cent lower than that in neighbouring — and equally industrialized — Ontario; average wages are 17 per cent lower; and unemployment levels in Quebec are among the highest in the country, scarcely exceeded by those of the economically-depressed Maritime provinces. While wage rates in large-scale industry are, thanks to trade union organization, roughly commensurate with those in similar industries elsewhere in Canada, they are extremely low in the small-scale industry producing for the domestic market. While Ontario's legislated minimum wage is $1.25, that of Quebec is only 80 cents an hour. The French-Canadian bourgeoisie has a direct interest in the maintenance of low wage rates. Thus, all classes of the French-Canadian population suffer a subordinate position economically and politically, within this Canadian confederation. This is the source of French Canada's exploitation as a nation. This is the source, also, of its nationalist consciousness as an **oppressed** nation.

5. Nationalist consciousness is common to some degree among all classes of the French-Canadian nation. As the galvanizing factor behind the social ferment in Quebec to-day, it is a powerful and wholly progressive force in raising the class-consciousness of French-Canadians, their awareness of their exploited position within the Canadian confederation. However, in Quebec — a highly industrialized society, closely integrated historically within the North American capitalist economy, lacking a landless peasantry, and with a developed industrial working class — nationalism is by no means an unalloyed phenomenon. In its "purer" forms, the new nationalist consciousness assumes a separatist orientation. But separatism, both as ideology and movement, has tended to this point to remain the political preserve of sections of the Quebec petty-bourgeoisie and the generally professionalized "middle classes" -- those elements most conscious of being blocked from accession to the highest posts of English-dominated industry and administration, and least capable, because of their social heterogeneity, of playing an independant role politically. Separatism is, in large part, a reflection of their frustrated **desire** to play an independant class role. It has not received significant support among those classes directly involved in the actual productive processes.

6. The French-Canadian bourgeoisie has historically served as a partial yet ineffectual buffer between the French-Canadian workers and farmers, and the giant North American capitalist interests operating in Quebec. It has been, and remains, not the competitor, but the complement of those interests. It is in the most general sense dependent upon imperialism for its own continued existence as a class, insofar as American imperialism provides the main source of investment within Quebec, and a major source of available loan capital for Quebec businessmen and their government. All the contemporary efforts of that government to ease the province's vulnerable and one-sided dependence upon foreign market conditions, simply aggravate the massive contradiction facing this national capitalist class: the primary source of the large-scale investment required for the Lesage government's projects to this end is located in ...the American capital market.

However, insofar as it is now belatedly developing some of the characteristics of a classic "national" bourgeoisie — a bourgeoisie with few direct responsibilities in large-scale industry — the French-Canadian capitalist class's desire to be the competitor of foreign capitalism — impossible of realisation — translates in some circles into a certain **latent** (or, perhaps more accurately, **vestigial**) separatism: e.g., half-serious proposals for "associate state" status with English Canada, etc. (But without massive nationalizations, an Associate State of Quebec would mean simply a new and more degenerate form of neo-colonialism.) The possibility of a future seperate or "autonomous" State of Quebec must not be entirely ruled out; however, it is hardly a probable hypothesis. Even a seperate socialist Etat du Québec encircled by a capitalist North America is highly unlikely, given the interrelated character of the Canadian class struggle, at least up to now.

Overriding all considerations regarding the political direction of the French-Canadian bourgeoisie is the obvious and important fact that that class cannot play, even if it wants to, a role really

independent of North American capitalism as a whole. Politically, it strives mainly for a greater maneuverability vis-à-vis the English-Canadian state and, hence, foreign capital. The corollary of this is, that it cannot resolve the national question — precisely because it will not and cannot liquidate capitalism, the source of that question. It is "national" ...but also, **bourgeois**. This fundamental paradox is yet another indication of the supremacy of class issues over national issues in the Quebec struggle.

7. The struggle of French-Canadian workers and farmers is not orienting towards the formation of a separate state at this time. Although the pan-Canadian and North American labor movements have often failed to give adequate recognition and support to the super-exploited Quebec workers within their unions, the essential unity of interests of those workers with English-speaking workers both in and out of Quebec is only seldom being seriously challenged, even today. Some of the most militant actions — e.g., the postal workers' strike, as well as the impressive vote registered among French-Canadian industrial workers for the NDP, the party of the predomlnantly English-Canadian labor movement, in the most recent federal election — demonstrate the already-existing interaction and interrelated character of the Quebec and English-Canadian class struggles.

The movement toward rejection of international affiliations in favor of the creation of autonomous Quebec unions linked with the CSN, which was particularly marked in 1964, declining drastically in importance and scope the following year, represents essentially a rejection, by large numbers of the most militant workers, of the bureaucratic and chauvinistic misleaderships of those "internationals" — leaderships which have tended to obstruct the growing wave of militancy among Quebec trade unionists. The widespread demand for full autonomy for Quebec locals, either within or without the internationals — a demand which is wholly progressive and which deserves the support of all class struggle militants — represents not a rejection of the principle of international solidarity, but is rather an expression primarily of the more advanced tempo of the contemporary class struggle in Quebec. Thus, the QFL's "National Caucus'" at its last convention could, with perfect consistency, call for trade union autonomy and a special constitutional statute, for' Quebec (some partisans also calling for an "autonomous" labor party formation); yet at the' same time "oppose a relaxation of the ties between Canadian and. International unions", as the only viable basis for the forging of **real** internationalism-- the free union of equal partners -- in the labor movement.

Nationalist consciousness, insofar as it exists among French-Canadian industrial workers, is qualified by the fact that the most militant and bitterly-contested strike struggles in recent years have been fought in the low-wage, low-productivity sector of the Quebec economy, and against the marginal French-Canadian bourgeoisie, which has for less maneuverability than its English-Canadian and American allied interests. A corollary to this generalization: it is already clear to advanced layers of the French-Canadian working class that the approaching Quebec revolution cannot simply be a nationalist revolution but must immediately take up the socialist tasks, the expropriation of private capitalist holdings, French-Canadian as well as Anglo-Canadian and American, and their planned administration by the workers themselves.

8. It follows from this that the French-Canadian proletariat, which will be forced to resolve even the national tasks of the Quebec revolution, is not fundamentally interested in a separatist solution of its national problem. The struggle in Quebec is a social -- a class — struggle, and there is no evidence to suggest that the demand by revolutionary socialists for categorical separation from the Canadian state would in any way raise the political consciousness and combativity of the French-Canadian-workers and farmers. Objectively, the class struggle in Quebec as elsewhere in Canada still remains oriented politically first and foremost against the central government and regime. That government — Ottawa — holds all the major political powers of the Canadian (and Quebec) capitalist state. It represents the united interests of big Canadian capital, both Bay and St. James Streets.

9. Nevertheless, in its organised political expression, the new nationalist consciousness —-the subjective factor — is reflected in the demand for a separate, autonomous party of the Quebec workers and farmers -- a party with full control over its own structures and program. The Parti Socialiste du Québec is a major

move in this direction; leading elements of the Nationalist caucus of the Quebec Federation of Labour are sympathetic to this demand. Such an indigenous mass labor party appears to be a likely development for the not-too-distant future. Revolutionary socialists should solididarize with the demand for an **autonomous** labor party in Quebec. Agitation for autonomy in this case reflects the rejection of a bureaucratic, ignorant and chauvinistic English-Canadian and American leadership in the NDP arid Labor movement. Revolutionary socialists likewise profess no confidence in these "leaders" and their reformist — hence inadequate —- programs. In this sense, the demand for "autonomy" is an expression of the relatively advanced tempo of the struggle in Quebec. As such it has a progressive content. But it represents primarily a limited, transitional stage in the advancement of French-Canadian workers towards a full understanding of the class character and pro-capitalist ideology of that bureaucracy, and their necessity to pose a **class**-conscious opposition to it.

Unlike the nationalists, we do not generalize our acceptance and support of autonomous organizations. Such support on our part has only a tactical character. Our criterion here is whether or not such autonomy represents a step forward in the organization of the class independent of the bourgeoisie. And within "national" formations we call for the closest fraternal ties with the class organizations of the English-Canadian and American workers.

10. The question of autonomy has arisen among our own forces mainly as an extension of its almost universal acceptance as a proposition among the leading layers of the French-Canadian revolutionary left. The proposal for the creation of a formal special statute for our Quebec forces assumes several differing varients: a) full "autonomy", a separate party with its own program and independent leadership; or b) some form of "special statute"; the institution, for example, of a "binational committee" of a united Canadian section, the French-Canadian comrades in turn enjoying a fixed minimum or proportion of representation, regardless of their relative numbers, vis-à-vis the English-Canadian comrades.

Two major considerations are relevant to any resolution of this question: a) our organizational and political concepts, and b) our estimation of the direction of the struggle for self-determination and socialism in French Canada.

11. We are a world party, because the interests of the working class are international. Our world movement is a centralized one, in which all national sections are subject to the judicious intervention and discipline of the International through its leading bodies and congresses. Thus it is misleading to speak in this sense of "autonomy"; no section is "autonomous". Writing in 1922 in defense of Article 9 of the Comintern statutes, Trotsky made explicit this, "the basic distinction between the Third International and the Second":

> ""Like each of its component Communist parties, the International is a centralized organization whose leadership is concentrated in the Executive Committee, invested with full powers by a World Congress which convenes annually. In contrast to all other international organizations, steeped in national prejudices, the Comintern is thus not a federation of independent national parties, but a unified and great World Communist Party. The International has the unquestionable right to reject applications for membership and to expel previously admitted parties. In the intervals between World Congresses this right is exercised by the ECCI. That is the meaning of Article 9 of the statutes," — in *The First Five Years of the Communist International,* vol. 2, p. 159

The division of our international movement into "national" sections is the logical result of the continued existence of national states -- the normal form of capitalist rule. The multitude of nation states differing as to forms of rule, language, culture, traditions, and tempos of development presents to our movement a whole range of widely differing secondary tasks and specific orientations. Obviously it is of the utmost importance that our respective national sections adjust our basic program to fit the needs of local situations, that they be sensitive to local nationalism and cultural differences.

The key factor governing the definition of "national" sections is their division according to self-governing political states. A secondary factor, in colonies or in states which contain within their borders oppressed nationalities, where the struggle orients around the demand for political autonomy, is the direction of that struggle **toward the creation** of autonomous self-governing political states. In any other conditions, the creation of a special statute for our Quebec section would constitute balkanization of the forces of Canadian Trotskyism.

12. Why such a rigid conditioning of the terms for an autonomous party? The basic objection to the concept of an autonomous or federated French-Canadian revolutionary party is that it violates our understanding of democratic centralism, which assumes the capacity of the united French- and English-Canadian leadership, armed with our appreciation of the national question, to formulate a program which takes into account the particular features of each of the two nations, and which meets the objective requirements of each national situation. The concept of "autonomy" violates our principled position in support of the supremacy of class politics over national differences. To deny the comrades of the "other nation" the right to decide in comradely collaboration with us the program of our movement — a program for which they too are responsible, as members of a common movement oriented toward power at the federal level of government — is to deny their capacity to rise above whatever "national" prejudices and misunderstandings they are subject to.

We can tactically support autonomy for mass formations of the French-Canadian working class not under our leadership, precisely because they do not adhere to our program nor are they governed by our organizational concepts. Their politics are eclectic; their leaderships, pragmatic. They should be regarded as essentially transitional formations, which develop or stagnate depending on the degree of correspondence between their programs and objective reality as it is revealed to the workers through their experiences. Our support for these autonomous formations concretizes our political recognition of French Canada's right to self-determination.

Democratic centralism, by contrast, is based on the "long view", which dialectically describes the national question within the larger context of the class question. For us, the democratic centralist party is the repository of the most advanced thought of the working class. It is not a conglomeration of conflicting lobbies, pressure groups, or diverse ideologies contending for organizational and political hegemony. It is **centralized**, a combat party, with one ultimate aim — to lead the working class to the conquest of state power and the transition to socialism. To effect that aim, it is necessary to reject federalistic organizational concepts. Our program for the **state** -- self-determination — cannot be confused with our concept of the **party** — democratic centralism.

13. Our concept of the democratic centralist party is derived historically from the Bolshevik party of Lenin's day -- a party which succeeded in mobilizing and uniting the advanced workers of many different nationalities oppressed under the Czarist autocracy, to carry out the world's first socialist revolution. In this respect, the policy of the Bolsheviks on the organizational relation of the party to the national question is particularly instructive for, as Lenin pointed out in 1905**,** "in no other country do the workers of all nationalities — and above all those who are not of Russian nationality suffer such economic and political oppression as they do in Russia." And the movement against national oppression throughout the Czarist empire, in which the dominant Russian nation constituted only 43 per cent of the total population, was to play a key role in the final dissolution of that empire. "For the oppressed nations of Russia the overthrow of the monarchy inevitably meant also their own national revolution" (Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution*). In the course of the three Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, national demands appeared in all their forms — from federalism, to "autonomous" associate states to complete separation and political independence. The significance of these nationalist demands in the context of Russia's capitalist development is well situated by Trotsky':

"Whereas in the nationally homogeneous states the bourgeois revolutions developed powerful centripetal tendencies, rallying to the idea of overcoming particularism, as in France, or overcoming national disunion, as in Italy and Germany — in nationally heterogeneous states on the contrary, such as Turkey, Russia, Austria-Hungary, the belated bourgeois revolution released centrifugal forces. In spite of the apparent contrariness of these processes when expressed in mechanical terms, their historic function was the same. In both cases, it was a question of using the national unity as a fundamental industrial reservoir. Germany had for this purpose to be united, Austria-Hungary to be divided."

The Bolsheviks developed their program correspondingly.

"Lenin early learned the inevitability of this development of centrifugal national movements in Russia, and for many years stubbornly fought — most particularly against Rosa Luxemburg — for that famous paragraph 9 of the old party program which formulated the right of nations to self-determination — that is, to complete separation as states. In this the Bolshevik party did not by any means undertake an evangel of separation. It merely assumed an obligation to struggle implacably against every form of national oppression, including the forcible retention of this or that nationality within the boundaries of the general state. Only in this way could the Russian proletariat gradually win the confidence of the oppressed nationalities.

"But," continues Trotsky, "that was only one side of the matter. The policy of Bolshevism in the national sphere had also another side, apparently contradictory to the first but in reality supplementing it. Within the framework of the party, and of the workers' organizations in general, Bolshevism insisted upon a rigid centralism, implacably warring against every taint of nationalism which might set the workers one against the other or disunite them. While flatly refusing to the bourgeois states the right to impose compulsory citizenship, or even a state language, upon a national minority, Bolshevism at the same time made it a verily sacred task to unite as closely as possible by means of voluntary class discipline, the workers of different nationalities. Thus it flatly rejected the national-federation principle in building the party. **A revolutionary oiganization is not the prototype of the future state, but merely the instrument for its creation. An instrument ought to be adapted to fashioning the product; it ought not to include the product** *(emphasis by the Web Ed.)* Thus a centralized organization can guarantee the success of revolutionary struggle — even where the task is to destroy the centralized oppression of the nationalities."

—*History of the Russian Revolution,* vol. III, pp. 37-8

There can be no doubt that this is an accurate presentation of Lenin's position on the structure of the party. In the spring of 1905 he wrote, in referring to the oppression of nationalities under Czarism:

"The more onerous this bondage, the greater yet the necessity for the closest union between the proletarians of different nationalities, without which a victorious struggle against the oppression would be impossible. The more the despoiling autocracy does its best to sow discord, distrust and hate between the nationalities oppressed by it... yet the more must we social-democrats work to combine all the isolated social-democratic parties, belonging to diverse nationalities, into a single Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party."

—translated from *Oeuvres Complètes*, tome 7, p501, Moscou-Paris 1934.

In a letter to Maxim Gorky, written in the latter half of February, 1913, Lenin was even more categorical.

"With us, even in the Caucasus, Georgian and Armenian and Tartar and Russian social-democrats worked **together**, in a **single** social-democratic organization, for more than ten years. This is no phrase, it is the proletarian solution to the national question. The only solution. It was the

same at Riga too: Russians, Letts, and Lithuanians; only the separatists, the Bund, remained apart. And so too at Vilna."

—*ibid*,, Tome 35, p.80 (emphasis in original)

When, after the revolution, the question of the party's structure was again raised, albeit in different circumstances, by certain comrades in the French section, Trotsky, speaking in the name of the leadership of the Communist International, reaffirmed the by-now traditional distinction made by the Bolsheviks between the structures of the state and party:

"The federalistic principle is completely incompatible with the actual interests of the revolutionary organization. References to the federative constitution of the Soviet Republic must be recognized as false to the core, because the organization of the Communist Party cannot be identified with the organization of the Soviet State. In all the Federated Republics the Communist Party is unified and rigidly centralized. Communists in the Ukraine, in Georgia, in Azerbaijan and elsewhere are linked with Communists in Moscow, Petersburg and so on, not by elements of federalism but by elements of strictest democratic centralism. Only thanks to the unity of this centralized organization of the'working class was Soviet Russia able to defend herself in the struggle against her countless enemies. The International categorically warns against the application of the principles of federalism and autonomy inside a revolutionary party which must be the mighty lever of revolutionary action." --*The First Five Years of the Communist International*, vol. 2,-pp. 144-5,'New York, 1945.

14. So much, then, for the position of the Bolsheviks on this question. Given that Quebec cannot be considered a colony in which the primary struggle is one for political independence from the "metropolitan" country, it seems clear that there is no justification for the formation in Canada of the first federated Bolshevik party in history. Even if, as is the case, the Canadian bi-national state departs from the "normal" pattern of homogeneous single-nation states, this does not in itself change the essential orientation of the struggle for socialism in Canada. That struggle remains, as it happens, directed first and foremost against the central regime. That that regime violates the rights of one of the two nations is yet another very powerful argument against the' base of that regime — the capitalist system. But the national oppression of Quebec by English-Canadian and American capitalism, far from constituting an argument for separatism, simply adds greater urgency to the necessity for the defeat of capitalism... in North America as well as Quebec.

15. However, the very fact that the question of autonomy has been posed at all —in itself, a manifestation of the great importance of the national question to our work'in Quebec — suggests that such a categorical, formal presentation of the question is perhaps too simplistic. Our concept of democratic centralism does not rule out the possibility of making certain provisions **within a single Canadian party** designed to take account of the suspicions on the part of some French-Canadian revolutionary elements of "domination" by an English-Canadian numerical majority, to show our awareness of the national problem, and to permit the party better to meet the particular tasks posed by our Quebec work. One such "concession", the choice of a distinct name for our Quebec forces — la Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière, which is by no means a literal translation of "League for Socialist Action" -- has already demonstrated in a meaningful way our readiness to "Quebecize" our French-Canadian face. Another, and far more important measure, would be to give concrete recognition to our appreciation of the vanguard role of the French-Canadian workers in the coming Canadian revolution, through consciously encouraging the advance in the movement's leadership of Quebec comrades, as the American comrades consciously promote Negro comrades to their leadership.

Some changes in the internal constitution of the movement should not be ruled out. It could hardly constitute a violation of democratic centralism, for instance, to set up a permanent commission on Quebec charged with the responsibility of keeping the national committee informed of developments in French Canada. Such a permanent commission could be constituted as a sub-committee of the national (or "federal") committee of the Canadian party, composed of all Quebec NC members together with the

Political Committee — or some variation of that idea. This permanent Quebec commission would help serve to educate the party and its leading cadre, and would be understood by French-Canadians as a sensitive gesture on our part to a question of particular concern to them as Trotskyists.

These, and other possible measures, should be seriously considered by the movement in the coming period, as we attempt to concretize our position on the national question.

16. The national peculiarity of Quebec presents both French- and English-Canadian comrades with particular tasks. But there is no reason why these tasks cannot be coordinated within the framework and requirements of a single Canadian movement — a movement best situated to coordinate the struggle against the Canadian capitalist regime and its central government at Ottawa. Far from constituting an obstacle to the growth of our forces, this position can provide us with an unique opportunity to demonstrate in practice the meaning of democratic centralism and the revolutionary socialist approach to the Quebec national question.

March 28, 1966.

LES RAPPORTS LSO-LSA ***(dans W9-1968)***

(A NOTER: La déclaration qui suit dont le Congrès LSO/LSA adopta la ligne générale après en avoir discuté aux Congrès de 1966 et de 1968 est soumise à titre de renseignement pour la discussion préparatoire au Congrès de 1970.)